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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [KJUS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: DCM DISCUSSES ECON SURGE AND ESCAPED CON WITH PM'S
CHIEF OF STAFF

REF: BAGHDAD 4592

11. (C) SUMMARY: Deputy Chief of Mission Speckhard met with Dr. Tariq Abdullah, Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Maliki on December 19 to discuss plans for an economic surge and to share information on the case of escaped ex-electricity minister Aiham Sammarae. The COS was receptive to the DCM's idea for planning a joint economic surge to match the security effort and welcomed the intention to work with Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih. He also seized the opportunity to press for U.S. help to move the PM's December 16th speech initiatives through the Iraqi Council of Representatives (reftel). On Sammarae, the COS agreed with the DCM that there were political and legal issues for both Iraq and the US in the aftermath of the escape. He said that the US bore responsibility for securing the International Zone and as such was at least partly responsible for allowing Sammarae's escape. Furthermore, the Iraqi people would never believe that the escape was orchestrated without U.S. complicity. END SUMMARY.

ECONOMIC SURGE PROPOSAL

12. (C) The DCM previewed for the COS the idea of planning a joint economic surge to match the security program. The COS said he welcomed this proposal and agreed with the DCM's suggestion that the US should work with DPM Barham Salih to flesh out these ideas.

13. (C) The COS also took this opportunity to discuss efforts underway as a result of the PM's December 16th speech. He said that within the next 2-3 days, the PM would have committees formed to look at his other initiatives, including Debaathification reform and military pensions for Saddam-era Iraqi military personnel. He said there would be a period of time allotted for militias to give up their weapons, but that they would face an ultimatum: either disarm, or face the consequences. Dr. Tariq said that the CoR blocs would have one week to name ministerial candidates; if they fail to do so, the PM will make his decisions without their influence. He said that the CoR never holds to its timelines, that it makes promises but lacks implementation. The PM has begun to believe that the blocs stall on issues simply to derail the GOI, and he is adjusting his tactics to counter this. He must be strong to maintain favorable public opinion. In the meantime, the COS said, the PM hopes that the embassy will help keep pressure on the blocs not to stall.

AIHAM SAMMARAE ESCAPE

14. (SBU) The DCM raised our concerns over the escape from Iraqi custody of dual Iraqi-American citizen Aiham Sammarae. The DCM noted for the COS that EmbOffs as recently as

December 12 raised concerns with the Iraqi Police guarding Sammarae that certain obvious detention measures were not in place. For instance, he was not locked in his room, appeared to have free reign of the facility and the adjacent buildings, and most alarmingly, that there was a handgun in Sammarae's possession. The gun was only removed after EmbOffs and IPLOs asked the Iraqi Police about it; the response from the Iraqi Police was that one of officers had mistakenly left it in Sammarae's room. The DCM informed the COS that Sammarae has spoken to the New York Times and has indicated that his escape was an "Iraqi job" and that he had help from within the Ministry of the Interior.

15. (SBU) The DCM tried to dispel the rumor that an American convoy had absconded with Sammarae. In fact a convoy of four International Zone Police vehicles did arrive at the facility at 1330 in order to pick up two Iraqi Police officers and the lead IPLO to investigate a tip elsewhere in the International Zone. Sammarae was last seen by the Iraqi Police at the station well after the convoy departed. The COS explained that Iraqis would find it hard to believe that the US did not facilitate his escape, and that the timing of the convoy was still close enough to the time of his disappearance to raise suspicions. Also, since the IZ is under U.S. control, the US bears at least part of the responsibility for his escape. The DCM responded that Sammarae has claimed to the New York Times that he left from BIAP, which is under Iraqi control. Dr. Tariq said that the GOI has arrested the lieutenant colonel in charge of the station and is investigating others. The DCM concluded by expressing his concerns over potential extradition complications should Sammarae find his way to the US.

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